

## **State of the City 2008**

Mayor Mark Mallory

City of Cincinnati

February 4, 2008

Playhouse in the Park



Thank you John.

I want to begin by thanking the Playhouse in the Park for hosting us this evening. I want to thank Ed Stern, the Artistic Director of the Playhouse in the Park. The Playhouse is the only Tony Award winning theater in Ohio.

I would also like to thank the program participants, our honored guests, friends, city employees, and citizens of Cincinnati. Thank you for joining me tonight to reflect on our accomplishments last year, and set our course for next year.

And I always like to acknowledge the source of my inspiration, my wonderful parents, Mr. and Mrs. William L Mallory, Sr.

I'd like to welcome to the stage, my partners, the members of City Council: Vice Mayor David Crowley, President Pro Tem Laketa Cole, Jeff Berding, Chris Bortz, John Cranley, Leslie Ghiz, Chris Monzel, Roxanne Qualls, Cecil Thomas. And ladies and gentlemen, our City Manager, Milton Dohoney, Jr.

Let's get right to it. Tonight, I am here to report that the State of our City is strong and Cincinnati is on the move.

We are without a doubt moving toward our full potential. And, we are doing it by improving public safety, growing our economy, strengthening our neighborhoods, investing in youth, greening our city, and improving our national and international image.

Of all of the progress that we have made in Cincinnati last year, the most important is our progress in the area of public safety.

Our number one priority is reducing homicides, and last year we were successful in cutting the number of homicides by 22 percent. But, even one homicide is too many, and we remain committed to continuing to reduce the number of violent crimes in Cincinnati.

Our success is the result of the collaboration between my office, City Council, the Police Department, the community, other elected officials and leaders throughout the city.

Let me tell you about the successes that our partnerships have produced.

We have put more officers on the streets. We graduated 49 police officers last year, and we are hiring 80 new officers this year.

The number of calls to CrimeStoppers increased, helping to solve 41 murders, 52 felony assaults, 9 kidnappings and 57 aggravated robberies.

Cocaine seizures increased by 60% over 2006; more than 7,000 pounds of marijuana were seized; over 1,200 weapons were seized, and almost \$1 million dollars was confiscated, and that is a 74% increase over 2006.

The Vortex Unit continued to aggressively pursue the most dangerous and violent individuals in our community and because of their efforts crime in Over-the-Rhine was reduced by 23%.

To ensure that young people are in school, we continued focusing on truancy sweeps returning over 600 students to school where they belong.

Last year, we continued our partnership with the State Highway Patrol to make our streets safer. We reduced injury accidents by 10% and traffic fatalities by 22%. The joint initiative has been so successful that the Highway Patrol is using what we have done in Cincinnati as a model for other cities in Ohio.

In June, we created a partnership with Cincinnati Children's Hospital, the University of Cincinnati, a broad mix of law enforcement agencies, and community organizations. And, we launched CIRV – the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence. It's designed to reduce gun-violence and homicides, by focusing on disrupting the group dynamic which promotes violence in our city.

Modeled after the Boston Gun Project from the mid-1990s, CIRV modified that strategy with the addition of direct, one-on-one attention by the Streetworkers of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission. Now, the Cincinnati Model is garnering attention from around the state, the country, and the world, as a best practice in the effort to reduce violence.

CIRV is about helping people change their lives, but if the help that we offer is not accepted and they continue to engage in violent acts, we will use every available resource to put them behind bars for as long as possible.

Of the individuals who have been targeted by CIRV, 105 of them have committed to changing their lives, and are actively receiving help – everything from educational services, to substance abuse treatment, to credit counseling. It should come as no surprise that the number one requested service is help finding employment.

So, with more police officers, the implementation of CIRV, Out of the Crossfire, and all of the other safety initiatives that we have in place, we have cut the overall crime rate by more than 8 percent and the violent crime rate by 12 percent.

In order to truly transform our communities and produce lasting change, progress in reducing crime must be followed by increased investment and economic opportunity. That's why growing Cincinnati's economy and creating new jobs is a top priority for my administration. We will not wait for opportunity to come to us; we will go after opportunity wherever it is, because that's how we shape our economic future.

Last year, I told you that we were committed to running a world-class economic development department. In 2007, the City Manager conducted a nationwide search to find our new Economic Development Director, Holly Childs. We then increased the staff of that office. And now, we are systematically marketing Cincinnati locally, nationally, and internationally.

Health Insurance giant Humana chose to stay and grow in Cincinnati, keeping 529 jobs, and relocating 300 new jobs from Northern Kentucky. They also expect to add an additional 300 jobs over the next several years. And, in order to accommodate those jobs, they are building a new 250,000 square foot office tower and a 125 room hotel.

FirstGroup America is expanding their operations in Cincinnati, keeping 140 jobs here and creating 135 new jobs.

We reached an agreement with Kendle International to keep their headquarters in Carew Tower. That keeps more than 600 jobs, and creates 75 new jobs over the next three years.

In Evanston, the first phase of Keystone Parke will be completed this spring. When the \$100 million dollar, green office complex is complete it will house 2,000 jobs.

In Oakley, a 300,000 square foot office complex, Midtown Centre, will break ground this year and will be home to more than 1,200 jobs and a 100 room hotel.

In Columbia Tusculum, we have also invested \$1.6 million dollars in a street project, which cleared the way for the 50,000 square foot Columbia Square development.

In Avondale, working with the Uptown Consortium, we're building a \$52 million dollar development on Burnet Avenue that includes 75,000 square feet of new office space in two buildings and a 1,400 car parking garage. That complex will be the new home of the Cincinnati Herald.

As Mayor, I have been and will continue to be directly involved in the efforts to seek new investment in Cincinnati. Last year, I told you that we were selected by a national non-profit for an analysis of our population and our true buying power. So, with those results, we introduced Shop 52, an effort to attract new, needed services, like grocery stores, pharmacies, and banks, to our 52 vibrant neighborhoods.

Last year, we presented Shop 52 at the international convention of retailers to proactively pursue retail opportunities. And we'll be there again this year to continue to seek new investment in our neighborhoods.

Later this month, I will be teaming up with the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland to co-host a summit to encourage new, small business investment in our neighborhoods because our neighborhoods are truly worthy of investment.

Last year, we went to the international community and promoted Cincinnati as a place to do business. In partnership with the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, I led an economic development trade mission to Germany to promote business exchange between Cincinnati and German companies.

And, I attended the Jerusalem Conference of Mayors to promote Cincinnati. Every year, 400 new enterprises spring up in Israel and some are looking for places in the US to do business.

In 2006, we launched GO Cincinnati to develop a long-term strategic plan to grow our economic base. Councilman Chris Bortz and Ellen van der Horst, President of the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, headed the steering committee and they recently presented me with the recommendations and report. I want to thank them for their hard work. I also want to thank the funders of the project and all of the citizens who gave their input.

I am excited about the prospects that this report provides. It says that through targeted development, we can capture a \$146 million dollars more in revenue, 5,000 new jobs, and a greater share of the nearly 45,000 regional jobs projected to be created by 2014.

Here are some of the recommendations that I think we should advance right away.

Build a Streetcar System that connects Downtown to Uptown.

Create a business retention and expansion program to increase awareness of Cincinnati's strengths as a place to invest and expand.

Create an opportunity advisory council to review city processes to encourage more investment.

The report identifies nine business sectors that are projected to see the most job growth. I'll be asking Kathy Merchant of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation to develop a plan to prepare our workforce, so that our workers are ready to fill those jobs.

In order to advance the goals of GO Cincinnati, I will appoint an Implementation Team to move forward with my priorities.

With this new strategic vision, I am confident that we will expand our economic base in Cincinnati.

Go Cincinnati will require a fully educated, trained, and qualified workforce. That's why it is important to move toward full employment. Let me tell you what that involves. It involves summer employment for high school and college students, co-op programs, and ex-offender employment.

Youth employment is a top priority of my administration. Through our Jobs and Opportunities Fair and the City's Youth Employment Program, we have provided thousands of young people the opportunity to find employment. In fact, our program was presented as a best practice at the US Conference of Mayors and at the Mayors Innovation Project in Washington DC. Our program has been so successful that I am proposing that we increase the funding for the Cincinnati Youth Employment Program to \$2 million dollars a year in the next city budget.

Providing employment opportunities for youth has to be a community-wide priority. So, tonight, I am calling on Cincinnati's corporate community to partner with us in making youth employment a priority, not only by participating in my youth jobs fair but also by creating summer employment opportunities for young people in our city. It only takes about \$2,000 dollars to employ a young person for the summer. That makes good business sense.

We must also be serious about attracting and retaining young people in this city and the best way to do that is to incorporate them into our workforce at a young age. So this year, I will work with City Council and the Administration to fund a comprehensive co-op program. We will connect college students to the employment opportunities in City Government and at the same time, we will build a strong and effective workforce for the future of our city.

Which brings me to what may be an uncomfortable conversation for some. But as a city, we have to take on tough issues. And, ex-offender employment is one of those tough issues. I told you earlier that employment is the number one request from the people that CIRV has engaged. If we are going to truly grow our economy, we have to give opportunity to all citizens. Too many people are being excluded from employment because of mistakes in their past. This may be unpopular, but I am telling you, this has to happen. By opening the doors of economic opportunity to more citizens we will make our community safer and healthier.

Full employment means moving as many people as possible into meaningful work with no excuses.

And now, let me tell you about what we're doing in our neighborhoods. I'm going to start with Downtown. And yes, Downtown is a neighborhood.

2007 was another year of growth for downtown. Last year, 9 companies signed leases totaling over 175,000 square feet of office space. That means that businesses are moving Downtown and expanding Downtown, including Key Bank, KMK Consulting, Squire Sanders, and Taft Stettinius & Hollister.

There were 141 new condos that came online, and with the increased number of residents, there is an increased need for a downtown grocery store. That's why I formed a Grocery Store Task Force, with the single goal of making a Downtown grocery store a reality.

There were also 24 new shops, restaurants, and bars that opened last year. Just yesterday, the Enquirer said that "There are now so many dinner and lunch options downtown that a person could eat a meal at a different place 7 days a week for almost 3 months without crossing the

Ohio River or Central Parkway.” Now you all know, I am a regional Mayor, but I challenge you to come downtown any night of the week and see it yourself. Downtown is the place to be.

And, Downtown is about to get even more exciting with the agreement that we reached to begin building the Banks. I want to thank County Commissioner Todd Portune, members of City Council, the Banks Working Group, the staff at the city and the county, and all of those who participated and helped make this agreement happen.

I said from day one that I will not agree to a Banks Deal that does not have a comprehensive minority inclusion and workforce development plan. Well, this deal has the most comprehensive plan ever agreed to by the city and the county.

We ended last year with the announcement that Western Southern would build a 40-story skyscraper, and American Financial Group has signed on as the core tenant. I think it is great news that two of Cincinnati’s corporate giants have come together to re-invest and recommit to the Queen City.

With their announcement, the completion of the Banks deal, and a total of \$113 million dollars of new development last year, Downtown is clearly worthy of investment.

Last year, we continued our momentum in other neighborhoods around the city. We issued permits for 100 new single family homes, and permits for nearly 500 multi-family units. We saw the completion of 100 condominiums in OTR; 31 new condos in East Walnut Hills; and 150 renovated apartments for the elderly and disabled in College Hill. And, in Westwood, we also held the 8<sup>th</sup> CiTi-RAMA featuring Cincinnati’s first certified “Green” home.

And that momentum will continue this year with the construction of 150 condominiums at One River Plaza; new condos along Riverside Drive in the East End; the completion of 57 new condos at Parker Flats Downtown, the construction of 60 new condos in Westwood, and 100 more condos in Over-the-Rhine.

Two years ago, I told you that we were going to develop a program to focus city services on individual neighborhoods. Last year, we launched the Neighborhood Enhancement Program. It concentrates city services in targeted neighborhoods for 90 days. Last year, the program targeted Price Hill, Avondale and Northside. This year, we’re focusing on Clifton Heights, University Heights, Fairview, Westwood, and Evanston. With this new approach, we’re focusing on concentrated building code enforcement, tearing down problem buildings, and addressing crime hot-spots. And in partnership with the community, we are developing neighborhood assets. The program is transforming neighborhoods throughout the city.

Last year, we brought back the Office of Environmental Quality and I want to thank Larry Falkin for taking the challenge to lead that office in our efforts to create a more environmentally healthy city. In the short time he’s been here, we’ve worked to craft a regional climate protection plan. We’re also developing an energy management plan for city departments with the goal of reducing our energy usage by 10% in 4 years.

Working with my Young Professionals Kitchen Cabinet and my Youth Council, we collected over 27,000 pounds of recycling at 6 Cincinnati Public High Schools. This year, we are implementing several new initiatives to increase recycling citywide. And our efforts are paying off. Last year, more than 4,000 new recycling bins were distributed to Cincinnati residents.

In addition, through our Green Cincinnati Initiative, as a pilot program, we installed solar panels and a wind turbine at the Parks Administration Building right here in Eden Park. The results have been great, and now we are looking at installing solar panels at a second Parks building later this year. Last year, we planted 2,000 trees. This year, we're going to plant 2,000 more. Cincinnati received the Tree City Award for the 26<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

As Mayor, I developed an aggressive Youth agenda. I talked to you earlier about the importance of youth employment, but my youth agenda also includes mentoring, childhood nutrition, recreation, and education.

Mentoring is a cornerstone of my youth agenda because young people need positive influences in their lives. I started a Mentoring effort with the City Administration and we have recruited 100 mentors. But, to better deliver mentoring services across the region, I have asked STRIVE to align recruitment efforts, standards, and outcomes for local mentoring organizations. We've engaged 17 of the largest mentoring programs, and they represent almost 5,000 mentors. Together, we will create a world class mentoring system because mentoring makes a difference.

Last summer, with the help of Philanthropist Stan Chesley we extended the city swimming pool season. This year, City Council and I have fixed that problem for good in the Budget, and the pools will be open until school starts.

It is absolutely imperative that our children receive the best nutrition possible. Last summer, working with the Children's Hunger Alliance and our partners, we served more than 80,000 free, nutritious meals through the Summer Food Program. We also started an after-school snack program, which serves more than 1,200 snacks a day at our recreation centers.

Our largest partner in the effort to feed children is Cincinnati Public Schools. You know any discussions we have about the future of Cincinnati should include the quality of public education.

Let me tell you a few things you may not know. Cincinnati Public Schools have made some improvements. The graduation rate has increased almost 30 percent. Now, 80% of students are graduating. The state has designated the district to be in continuous improvement for 3 years in a row. Among Ohio's largest cities, only Akron can match that achievement.

But even with the success that we are seeing, there are still several Cincinnati Public Schools that need our help. That's why we will create Student Recovery Teams for each of CPS's lowest performing schools. This will be a collaborative effort between my office, Strive, the community learning centers, and the city administration. The recovery teams will bring together tutors, mentors, the corporate community, universities, social service agencies, and city workers.

The teams will make certain that each school has the resources and the expertise they need to ensure that every student has the chance to succeed.

You all know that City Government has no authority over public education, but we can send them help. And that is exactly what we are going to do.

I am also going to work with Nancy Zimpher, UC President, and the Greater Cincinnati Consortium of Colleges and Universities to enhance student exchanges between our institutions of higher learning and those in our sister cities. This will be a win-win for our local college students, our international partners, and our community.

I recognize the importance of attracting national conventions to our city. That's why I have been so actively involved in recruiting conventions like this year's NAACP National Convention, the National Baptist Convention, and the 2010 DARE America Convention. And I am going to continue to be at the forefront of attracting as many conventions to our city as possible.

Which brings me to one of the most important opportunities that we have in Cincinnati: the 2010 Census. We know that census numbers matter. What you may not know is that 170 Federal Programs use Census Data to make funding decisions. In order for Cincinnati to receive our fair share, we must have the most accurate Census count possible. So, we must begin planning now for 2010.

Therefore by April 1<sup>st</sup>, I will appoint a committee that will be charged with ensuring that we get the most accurate census count possible in the City of Cincinnati. Getting an accurate count will be the best opportunity that we have to bring additional federal, state, and even private resources to our city.

Ladies and gentleman, the state of our city is strong and Cincinnati is on the move.

We have a great story to tell. And, we have to take the opportunity to tell that story every chance we get.

We have a lot of reasons to be proud about what is going on in Cincinnati. We should be proud of the gains that we have made in fighting crime. We should be proud of the investments being made in our neighborhoods. We should be proud of the fact that businesses are eager to invest in Cincinnati.

And if we continue to build on that pride and reject the kind of thinking that says that we can't succeed, we will continue to see progress on the issues that are important to our future.

Last year, we made a lot of investments in our city. However, the greatest investment that we can make is an investment in the people of Cincinnati. It's our people that make this city great, and that's why Cincinnati is truly a city worthy of investment.

Thanks you and God Bless the City of Cincinnati.